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## **Chapter 4: Creative spaces for developing independent writing with English teachers.**

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Typically, English teachers come into the profession because they are voracious reader with English Literature degrees and wish to share their love of books (Blake and Shortis, 2010); far fewer join because they are voracious writers. English teachers often present themselves to their students as book-lovers (with many an English teacher's email footer announcing what they are currently reading), but it is rare for them to promote themselves as authors. Yet it goes without saying that a balanced classroom English curriculum depends upon the warp of writing as much as the weft of reading. Young children make connections between reading and writing very early as they experience literacy in the world around them (Heath, 1982). Britton asks why should we see reading and writing as separate entities any more than speaking and listening, since each is fundamental to the other (1989; cited in Smith & Wrigley) and goes on to remark, 'The world about the child waits to be written about' (1994: 110). The current national curriculum states that the purpose of English education is teach students 'to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others, and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them' (DfE, 2014a). However, despite the interdependence of reading and writing, practising English teachers have cited their own lack of confidence as writers as a reason for their resistance to developing their pedagogy in writing (NAWE, 2010).

### **Why do we need to develop teachers as creative writers?**

There are various reasons why individual teachers may not identify themselves as writers, leading to this collective lack of confidence in the profession. One problem might be concerned with the act of writing itself. Writing is a journey of discovery for a writer, just as exploring a text can be for a reader. Indeed, since the act of production necessarily precedes the act of consumption and interpretation of a text, it could be argued that writing is the logical way to prepare for the 'adventure' of reading. The hermeneutic scholar Gadamer discusses the creation of a piece of writing, encouraging us to think about the making of meaning, or how meaning comes to be *even before the text exists for us as reader to decipher* (1986, my emphasis). Gadamer suggests that the author does not have a pre-conceived idea of

where they are writing to; the act of writing is itself an act of investigation. He argues that even if a writer has a plan and works towards it, they are actually discovering their direction as they go. This suggests, building on Rorty (*in* Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2006/2014), that the writer, as the creator of a text, is altered through the writing process, as well as – subsequently – the reader. For those who identify themselves as writers, all this can be very exciting, even liberating; for those who do not, however, it can spark fear – writing is a journey into the unknown, including the ‘unknown’ of oneself.

A connected concern is the fear of being judged, a fear of failure. Ironically, partly as a consequence of having read so much ‘good’ writing throughout their lives, earning a degree in English Literature and identifying themselves as experts in reading, English teachers are anxious about writing because they doubt that they will come up to a self-imposed mark (‘I don’t choose to write creatively, probably because I’m worried it wouldn’t be any good’; ‘I was paralysed by wanting it to be good’ (Trainee<sup>1</sup> responses, 2016)). It is all very well for AS Byatt to point out that good reading makes good writing possible (*in* Barrs and Cork, 2001 *in* Smith and Wrigley, 2016) but one can imagine a ‘she would, wouldn’t she?’ style of response: for many, there remains a disconnect between advice from an established, critically-acclaimed best-selling author and the actions of a novice teacher-writer. Yet studies that have shown that teachers’ beliefs in their own writing capacity has an impact on the success of their students’ (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013) and thus it is particularly important to help teachers themselves identify as writers.

A third reason for teachers not viewing themselves as writers is that they identify *instead* as professional practitioners: they do not see room for the writer in the teacher. Trainees and established teachers alike report feeling guilty if they spend time on their own writing; they feel that time could (and should) be better spent doing other things that they perceive as more immediately relevant to their role and so do not prioritise writing: ‘There can be so much school paperwork... There is often a feeling of being overwhelmed’ (Buckinghamshire teacher *in* Smith and Wrigley, 2016); ‘There is so little time to do this on top of everything else that I found it difficult to write’ (Trainee responses, 2016). Writing can be seen as an

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘trainee’ is used here as that currently used by the Department for Education, although ‘student teacher’ or ‘beginning teacher’ are possibly more helpful appellations.

egotistical activity (which is hard for altruistic teachers to accept), or a selfish luxury to be completed ‘when time permits’ or ‘maybe when I ... feel I can ‘afford’ the time’ (Trainee responses, 2016). The current ‘high-stakes learning environment’ (Bifuh-Ambe, 2013: 137) cannot but exacerbate the situation.

Further, that same national curriculum that requires both reading and writing to be taught at key stage 3 is remarkably light on detail when it comes to the type of writing that students are required to undertake – is creative writing even encouraged? The writing orders are condensed to fewer than 200 words, in which ‘grammar’ appears four times, ‘accurate’ and ‘spelling’ twice each, with their cousins ‘punctuation’, ‘knowledge of literary and rhetorical devices’, ‘plan, draft, edit and proofread’ jostling for attention (DfE, 2014a); on top of this is an *additional* 170 words that detail the grammar and vocabulary that ‘should be taught’ (ibid): the shininess of a finished written product appears perhaps more important than the messy processes that go into making it. The list of suggested writing genres begins with the rather uninspiring ‘well-structured formal expository and narrative essays’ (DfE, 2014a). There is no reference to ‘creative’ or ‘creativity’ and only one to the related concept of ‘imagination,’ (Smith and Foley, 2015) in contrast to the previous version, where Creativity (sic) was one of the four underpinning concepts of the English National Curriculum(QCA, 2007). We grant that the concept of ‘creativity’ is a complex one, so much so that the noun ‘creativities’ has been coined to indicate how it means many things to many people (McCallum, 2012) – for instance, that ‘well-structured formal expository essay’ could be said to be ‘creative’ both because it is a piece newly-created (it did not exist before) and because it may be written in an original or imaginative style. Yet even if we are not all Big C ‘genius’ creatives (Craft, 2001), creativity is a fundamental to human development and should be nurtured. So, whilst it could be argued that the paucity of detail in the current curriculum might be liberating for teachers (and students) in that it frees them to write in any way they like, the danger is that creative writing in the sense that most readers would understand - the opportunity to write freely and expressively - now appears to be almost absent from the national curriculum. Accordingly, a teacher hard-pressed to ensure that their classes make the required ‘progress’ in the technicalities of writing may now feel obliged - or even mandated - to do so through dry formal writing activities dressed up as ‘Literacy’ and avoid creative writing altogether. With children thus deprived of creative writing opportunities, it is not

surprising that today's authors are wondering where tomorrow's writers will come from (Rosen, 2015).

Finally, it may be that teachers often do not see themselves as writers because they were not trained as writers. Although the idea of teachers writing themselves, even alongside their students, is not new - indeed, active modelling of writing was encouraged in guidance to English teachers almost a century ago (Board of Education, 1924) - reference to such an approach as part of teacher education programmes is relatively rare. The Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) course that I followed at an esteemed university nearly thirty years ago did not encourage my cohort of trainees to write, nor did the PGCE course I inherited when I first became a lecturer. Further, despite wishing to promote writing as 'a contribution to various forms of social and cultural dialogue' (Moss, 2009: 139), explicit advice for teachers to write themselves remains absent from well-respected and commonly-used texts for English trainees (e.g. Sutherland & Wilkinson, 2010; Green, 2011; Gordon, 2015) – the implication is that writing is something that *students* do, not teachers. However, I would suggest that it is incumbent on teacher educators to help develop trainees as confident, sensitive, critical writers to support them when teaching writing in schools.

### **The role and influence of the National Writing Project**

One approach to developing established teachers' confidence as writers and address some (or even all) of these issues is through teachers' writing groups, in which there has recently been heightened interest and awareness through the work of the National Writing Project (NWP). The NWP, established in the UK in 2009 - inspired by the National Writing Project that had begun in the US in 1974 ([nwp.org](http://nwp.org)) – was established to explore the question 'What happens when teachers gather together to write and share their writing?' ([nwp.org.uk](http://nwp.org.uk)). The groups are supported to develop into communities of practice, with teaching and writing conjoined as the 'shared domain of interest' that enables the community to learn together from each (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This shared domain means that members come to explore their multiple identities: 'meetings are not simply about writing but about *who we are* as people and as teachers' (Smith & Wrigley, 2016:16, my emphasis). Testimonies from both the US and UK projects demonstrate that a community of practice provides companionship and a sharing of experience that 'strengthens and extends learning' (ibid: 3) and makes risk-taking

increasingly possible, leading to teachers' enhanced confidence. I set up a group in 2012 called Teachers as Writers, open to both established teachers and PGCE trainees as a voluntary enrichment activity (Smith, 2014); I also promote the NWP's ethos and approach with all my trainees as core to their practice.

Accordingly, this chapter focuses on developing the identities as writing teachers of two recent PGCE cohorts, each of around 25 trainees (a combination of Core and School Direct). All trainees were involved: the writing opportunities described below were not bolt-on enrichment activities attended by writing enthusiasts, but central to the programme. Writing of various descriptions takes place throughout the PGCE English year: trainees are recommended to keep a weekly blog or journal in which to record and reflect upon their professional learning and there are the inevitable assignments, but from the start they are also encouraged to write creatively, and it is some of these opportunities that I focus on here.

I draw below in particular from two sources of evidence – the trainees' weekly blogs or journals from both cohorts (focusing on trainees' impressions of the writing they had personally undertaken and creative writing lessons they had taught), and paired questionnaires from the most recent cohort that focused on trainees' writing identities before and after a specific creative writing activity. In all cases permissions were sought and obtained in the approved manner (BERA, 2011) and all responses referred to are anonymised. Because of the relatively small numbers involved, I am aware that it is not possible to draw conclusions of any statistical significance: however, I offer comments and observations which are of interest.

The first questionnaire was undertaken just after Easter, by which time the trainees had experienced – after a fortnight's introductory observation in a primary or secondary school - a total of 6 weeks of the University-based programme wrapped around 18 weeks of teaching practice across two different secondary schools. In order to provide parity and simply the analytical process, the questions were a combination of Likert scale tables with options for further comment and requests for short prose responses.

### **The writing identities of trainee teachers**

It was immediately striking that despite the various creative writing activities that they had already engaged in (in and around) University – with time built into the programme to enable them to write and reflect, and a lot of encouragement to do so - and the creative writing that they had led with their classes (with three quarters of the cohort having taught at least one such lesson), the majority of the trainees did not identify themselves as creative writers (with nine responding ‘not really’ or ‘to some extent’, against seven ‘yes, fairly’ and only one ‘very, definitely’). Those who did not identify themselves as writers did not express a dislike of writing – on the contrary, it was a lack of time or a perceived lack of talent that prevented them seeing themselves so; it was not that they did not *want* to write, but a sense that they could not or should not (with some of their comments cited above). Yet when asked about a creative writing experience they remembered, ‘whether positive or negative,’ every single response was positive, either because the writing activity fulfilled a personal or emotional need, or provided an opportunity for recognition. Examples included a GCSE creative writing assignment to write Bertha Mason’s diary (‘It allowed for absolute freedom and I really relished the chance’), keeping personal diaries that allowed for exploration of thoughts and feelings, success in competitions and the publication of poetry, and ‘writing a story...about something that came into my head when listening to a song and it affecting someone else’ (Trainee responses, 2016).

Further, despite the trainees’ insecurity about whether they did or did not identify as writers personally, all of them agreed that ‘it is important that English teachers write creatively’ (with four ‘to some extent’, nine ‘yes, fairly’ and four ‘very, definitely’), with several adding statements to the effect, ‘we cannot teach the processes of [writing] if we don’t understand them ourselves’ and that a writing teacher ‘inspire[s] and motivate[s]’ (ibid). In other words, although the trainees were over two thirds of the way through their PGCE, with most having already met the Teachers’ Standards and attained a post for the following year, and despite having taken part in and taught creative writing sessions and considered their own positive recollections of the creative writing experience, their individual images of the complete English teacher each aspired to be included a creative-writing-shaped jigsaw piece that a number had not yet found. Even one of the highest attaining trainees who had secured an NQT post in her placement school and had taught several post-16 creative writing lessons noted, ‘My concerns are that I don’t feel I am a naturally creative writer and I will find this task [as described below] difficult’ (ibid) .

Accordingly, the writing activities here described aimed to encourage the trainees to become more confident writers, foster their own personal, aesthetic development, and provide them with the ways to model creative practice for their own students. Aware that going out of class can be ‘liberating’ and ‘fertile’ for students (NAWE, 2010: 62) and that they ‘respond very positively’ (Smith and Wrigley, 2016: 65) to different settings, I wanted to prompt the trainees to consider the value of writing outside the confines of our teaching room. One trainee wrote that she hoped that writing outside would give her ‘another new discovery... about something/somewhere new, as well as myself (Trainee responses, 2016).

Further, I hoped that the experience of writing beyond the classroom would prompt the trainees to look at and question things past the obvious, and to consider whether - just as being a writer can help us understand the writing process in a different (arguably deeper) way than ‘just’ reading (Nabakov, 1980) - being writers *in a context* helps us understand that context in a far deeper way than ‘just’ visiting it. It was through being *in Nature*, not just reading about it, that Wordsworth gained the power to ‘see into the life of things’ (1798). Through writing intimately about the identity of a place, could the trainees would develop their own writing identities?

### **Writing in creative spaces**

We are fortunate in Bristol to have access to inspirational places close by. Within a few minutes’ walk from the Graduate School where the PGCE is based is The Georgian House, a large house now owned by Bristol City Council and open to the public as a museum. It was built around 1790; eleven rooms across four floors are presented as they might have been when it was newly constructed, enabling visitors to imagine what life might have been like both above and below stairs (<https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/georgian-house-museum/>). Five minutes’ in another direction there is the history-seeped Brandon Hill – a high point giving views across the harbour and generations of city towers. At the top of the hill is the dramatic Cabot Tower, a Gothic-inspired edifice built over 100 years ago to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing of John Cabot in Newfoundland in 1497. The tower is itself built on the site of an important Civil War fortress; round about the hill is parkland and a nature reserve.



I had prepared a short booklet of nineteenth century literary extracts for the trainees to accompany them to these settings, with the objective of supporting the trainees' appreciation of nineteenth century literature in an appropriate context, given the emphasis of the current national curriculum on this period (DfE, 2014b). The booklet for The Georgian House visit included, for instance, an excerpt from *Pride and Prejudice* to be read in the Breakfast Parlour, another from *The Secret Garden* for the Housekeeper's Room, another from *Jane Eyre* by the steps to the attic. The booklet for Brandon Hill included, amongst others, several stanzas from Poe's *The Raven* and Browning's *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*, and an atmospheric passage from *Barnaby Rudge*. The booklets were intended to be used as prompts for the trainees' writing if necessary. The trainees were told that the tangible outcome would be an anthology to be published at the end of the PGCE programme, to include at least one piece of writing from each trainee, possibly but not necessarily written in response to this stimulus. No other instructions were provided: the trainees were simply asked to immerse themselves in either setting, to be quiet and to write. They could work in small friendship groups or alone. They could write in any genre. They were encouraged to take notes and photos or record sounds if they thought that would be helpful. They were given four hours, and were asked to return to our teaching room with a piece that they were happy to share at the end of this time. I accompanied the trainees and wrote alongside them.

When the groups reconvened, they were asked to form pairs or groups of three with trusted peers. As has been illustrated by working with the Teachers as Writers groups (Smith, 2014; Smith and Wrigley, 2016), it is important that participants have confidence in those with whom they are working in order to forge effective communities of practice, not only because the writing they are sharing may be on a sensitive or personal theme, but because of the intimacy of the writing process itself and the revelations of self that are exposed (Gadamer, 1986). In these safe twos and threes, trainees' writing was discussed, honed and developed. We followed a process offered by a colleague<sup>2</sup> who had led a previous Teachers as Writers session: trainees were encouraged to read a peer's work carefully, offering i) general praise, ii) marginal notes and suggestions on form and content, iii) one criticism; and then identify one frisson-inducing 'real toad in the imaginary garden' (after Moore, 1924). Whilst trainees enjoyed sharing their work in this way, some found it 'valuable but vulnerable:' despite

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<sup>2</sup> David Briggs, the Head of English at Bristol Grammar School and published prize-winning poet: <http://poetrysociety.org.uk/poets/david-briggs/> [last accessed 09.09.16]

recognising how helpful it can be, ‘you feel slightly shy about your own work’ (Trainee journal extracts, 2015). This whole process led on to a useful discussion about how to prevent peer assessment that students might undertake in class becoming at best, an empty gesture, at worst, a barrier to writing: trainees began to consider how to develop a supportive community of practice in their own classrooms.

Subsequently, the trainees worked up their pieces for their respective anthologies; some excerpts are featured here. Reflecting on the writing produced from the visit to The Georgian House (Fig. 1), it is striking how many pieces were inspired by its history. The house was originally owned by John Pinney, a merchant made rich through slavery - and thus the house is central to the identity of the city itself. A small bedroom at the top of the house contains an exhibition with illustrations of the plantations Pinney owned, alongside further information about the triangular trade and the slaves’ working conditions. Several trainees incorporated their impressions of what life must have been like for the Pinney family and their servants with their horror of how the wealth had been generated. They produced poems and narratives that blended imagined descriptions of the Pinney’s rich, genteel household with a condemnation of the slave trade; ‘It got us thinking about how life and culture has changed and what we now expect from society’ (Trainee journal extracts, 2015). In doing so, they discovered both more about themselves and considered the type of teacher they wished to be.

Like the two extracts presented here (Fig. 2), much of the writing produced on Brandon Hill was inspired by the historical and cultural significance of the site as well as its natural beauty; a number of pieces focused on the relationship between human actions and nature. Again, there was a sense of exploration of self as well as place. Trainees variously described being ‘inspired’ and ‘engaged’; the ‘calm tranquillity’ provided ‘creative freedom’ that enabled them to experience a ‘very natural writing process’, as if the organic setting prompted something effortless and uncontrived (Trainee responses, 2016). A reluctant writer noted that it was a ‘fantastic setting, *even for people like me*, to take part in creative writing’ (ibid, my emphasis), which suggests that whilst she still did not immediately identify herself as a writer, she *had* felt impelled to write. The place explored and the trainee’s writing identity had become invariably intertwined.

Trainees completed a second questionnaire at the end of the PGCE, once they had had an opportunity to read the anthology of their work and reflect upon the process. When asked again whether they identified themselves as writers, a third of the cohort responded more positively than they had previously and several admitted to being pleased and proud with what they produced. This time, almost the whole group identified themselves as a writer at least ‘to some extent’, with most ‘fairly’ or ‘definitely’ doing so (Trainee responses, 2016). The fact that the balance had shifted so dramatically could perhaps be due to the collaborative spirit engendered by the communal writing, sharing and reflecting in the manner promoted by the National Writing Project – trainees felt in it together, prepared to take risks that they might not have done before. All remained convinced that teachers should be writers, with four indicating they now placed an increased significance on this. All plan to incorporate creative writing into their teaching, for a variety of reasons including ‘[students’] increased engagement and enjoyment’; it affords students ‘greater ownership’ of their learning and ‘teaches students to reflect on themselves as writers’; and, crucially, it helps students respond to a text and understand how authors ‘work’ because it ‘provides opportunities to think about and engage with texts differently’ (ibid). The trainees understood that they developed as readers themselves and they saw the value of ensuring that their students write creatively to help them develop as readers too.

Creative writing has become a tenet of the trainees’ professional identities. It is something they will use in their teaching to help their students develop a sense of *their* own identities, true to the child-centred practice described by Britton et al (Britton, 1994). Further, almost all expressed a commitment to continue as writers – those who were ‘lapsed’ writers vowed to do so more regularly, with one expressing her joy at rediscovering something she loved and promising not to lose it again; another undertook to go back to a part-finished novel; several realised that writing could be as an ‘outlet’ from work and simultaneously the opportunity to help them develop as professionals. Even the two of this cohort who responded that they would not write creatively for their own purposes stated that they would do so to provide models for students (Trainee responses, 2016).

### **Some conclusions: writing teachers in creative spaces**

I do not wish to claim that we have uncovered anything new about the value and importance of English teachers' practising writing (in the sense that doctors practise medicine). The need for teachers to be 'accomplished writers in themselves' (DCSF, 2008) is central to our personal identities as well as our professional identities, and to the identities of the students it is our responsibility to nurture (and particularly so, given research suggesting that students 'use their literacy practices to form their identities in, and sometimes in opposition to, the figured worlds of school, work and family' (Luttrell and Parker, 2001: 245)). However, this project has reinforced some points that I believe are important, especially in a political context which is suspicious of creativity (Gibb, 2015).

- 1) We must foster teachers' identities as writers in order to develop their pedagogy and help them better support their students.
- 2) Developing teachers' writing identities is time-consuming. There is no quick-fix way to turn a non-writer or a lapsed writer or an unconfident writer into a regular, committed writer, and established writers need to protect time to continue writing.
- 3) It is important that teacher training courses include opportunities for creative writing so that it is established as part of a trainees' professional identity from the off 'as anything else is simply playing catch up' (NAWE, 2010: 67).
- 4) Organisations such as the National Writing Project which encourage teachers to build communities of practice are effective in inspiring and supporting writing teachers at any stage of their career.
- 5) An individual's writing identity can be developed through exploring the identities of new places. A fresh context may become not simply the backdrop for writing processes and products, but core to the endeavour. Discovering the new beyond the confines of the classroom (even if simply the outer reaches of the playground) enables the discovery of the new in oneself.
- 6) Confident, imaginative, critical writers make confident, imaginative, critical readers.

For both writer and readers, interpretation is not about finding an end point but being led in a direction towards an 'open realm' (Gadamer, 1986: 68) that can be explored in various ways. The process of the writing and the reading might be different, but the result is similar: anyone who partakes in a text, whether producer or consumer, broadens their horizons. Whilst 'open' has connotations of danger and exposure, which may be apposite, I think that Gadamer is also referring to its sense of unrestricted freedom, particularly as 'realm' suggests a demesne over which the owner has influence. The writer and readers might end up in

different realms (even opposing realms), but this does not diminish the authority of their interpretations. Taking Gadamer literally and encouraging the writing to take place in a new realm simply emphasises this idea.

Meek famously claims that 'Literacy begins with writing' (1991: 18), on the chicken-and-egg principle that one cannot read if the text has not been written. I hope it would not discredit her if we adapt her statement: teaching literacy begins with teachers writing.

## Figures:

### Fig. 1: Writing from The Georgian House

#### Georgian House – an acrostic

Stone cold captivity

Lost in translation

Aristocrat Africans

Valuable possessions

Empty regret

Reflections distorted

Yesterday preserved

*Helen Conway*

#### Pinney: Returning to Britain from the West Indies (excerpt)

*March 7th 1795*

I am most excited to be returning to Bristol this season; the past year on Nevis has been so stifling and I have succumbed to a number of fevers that have significantly weakened my constitution.

Of course I couldn't contemplate returning to England without Pero, my most beloved slave. Without him I would be quite lost and my daily routine would simply fall apart.

My fondness for Pero must be described like ones best snuff box or pet lapdog. The comfort that Pero provides me is tantamount to my very existence... of course Madeleine does not understand this particular requirement of mine and finds it quite distasteful that I should return with a negro slave to attend about my person; she has even threatened moving to the bedroom in the west wind that overlooks the garden and doesn't get any air at all.

The business however has profited most greatly from the recent acquisition of 50 new slaves on the plantation. Pero was most helpful at the market in singling out the fittest - he definitely knows how to measure human stamina, for my recent purchase has created a 3 fold increase in profit compared to last year.

I must admit that I do not look at Pero in the same way... he seems to have a certain refinement about his features and a manner which almost allows me to perceive him as an equal. At these times I must check myself, for God has given me no sign or symbol that slavery should not be continued: I must continue to see them as placed here for my purpose.

*Josephine Close*

#### Dust (excerpt)

Margaret stepped slowly between the dust motes as they swam in the light of the soft May morning. The east-facing drawing room, with its pleasant view across College Green, was usually a favourite spot for the family at this time of day: the master frowning over his newspaper, Lady Pinney raising an eyebrow at the various social engagements she would not attend, and the children, briefly tolerated to chase each other through pools of sunshine. But today the house was silent. The family were blurred images, crossing an unknown ocean to the West Indies; a place so distant and unimaginable to Margaret as to render them non-existent.

*Laura Wyles*

## **Fig 2: Writing from Brandon Hill**

### The Cabot Tower (*excerpt*)

Life surrounds

the tower's skeleton.

Viewed from its skull,

weaving up its bones,

scampering through its concrete veins.

It stands a rare tranquillity

in a bustling city.

Looking with a steadfast melancholy

onto a changed world.

*Jennie Amer*

### The Tower (*excerpt*)

I built this tower three score years ago

-when I say built, I mean had built

by other folk of lesser birth

whose grey hands roughened were by nature's power,

and thus were suited to such baser tasks.

It was, by design, mine.

I dreamed its form; each balcony

and chiselled stone is placéd where I willed.

It is grand, is it not? Four strong stones

hold each corner straight and represent

the noble blood coursing down and through  
my veins from my great ancestors.  
I shall not name them, for there is no need.  
All the Empire knows their deeds, and mine.

*Bethany Arnott*



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